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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0151
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1760
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 8772
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 7010
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 5047
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3145
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 5006
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 1285
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4113
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 9382
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 6684
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO 1211
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3614
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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000639

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/24/2019

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [UN](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: TWO LOCAL U.N. STAFF DETAINED,
WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN

Classified By: A/DCM Michael DeTar, for reasons 1.4(b,d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Two local UN staff members are being detained by government forces, possibly for alleged ties to a 2006 assassination attempt on Defense Secretary Gothabaya Rajapaksa. The two men, who work as drivers for UNHCR and UNOPS, were taken into custody on June 12 and 13. The UN has been dealing with the cases quietly, only releasing a limited press statement about the incident on June 20. It appears that a police vehicle was involved in the original arrests of these men. However, to date the authorities have released no arrest record or detention "receipt," nor have they formally charged the drivers. It is unclear who is holding them, although one report said they were now detained in Colombo. Security forces were reportedly seeking a third UN employee, who apparently managed to leave the country. End Summary.

TWO UN DRIVERS HELD

12. (C) Information received by Post is that a driver for UNHCR, Mr. N. Charles Raveendran, was taken from his home in Vavuniya on Friday, June 12. The driver for UNOPS, Mr. Kandasamy Saundrarajan, was taken from a petrol station on June 13 while on duty. UN security (UNDSS) contacts are reasonably certain the vehicle used in at least one of the detentions was a police vehicle, but the UN is not certain now who is holding the two men. It appears that there has been no legal arrest in either case. According to public accounts and UN sources, Government security forces have filed no formal charges against either of the two men. Unconfirmed reports said the authorities have now transferred the men to Colombo.

13. (C) The ever-active Colombo rumor mill holds that the security forces suspect the men of transporting explosives used in an unsuccessful LTTE autorickshaw attack on Defence Secretary Gothabaya Rajapaksa in 2006. Unconfirmed media reports over the weekend of June 20-21 said authorities had also detained several employees of CARE International in connection with the same attack. A diplomatic colleague told EmbOffs of a report that security forces were seeking a third UN staffer, but that this person was no longer in the

country.

QUIET U.N. RESPONSE

14. (C) COMMENT: UN officials in Sri Lanka have handled the cases quietly so far, only releasing a limited statement on Saturday, June 20. Embassy contacts say the UN plans to file a fundamental rights case in the Supreme Court on behalf of the two men, and is also investigating whether this detention violates the government's obligations under the 1994 UN Convention on the Safety of UN and Associated Personnel. Local UN staff are reportedly disturbed about the low-key approach taken by the UN leadership in Colombo.
MOORE